

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held online, on Tuesday 26 May 2020

Present

Councillor Mike Mackrory (Chairman)	Councillor Malcolm Maddocks
Councillor James Abbott	Councillor Valerie Metcalfe
Councillor John Aldridge (substitute)	Councillor John Moran
Councillor Malcolm Buckley	Councillor Ron Pratt
Councillor Graham Butland	Councillor Andrew Sheldon
Councillor Mike Garnett	Councillor Anne Turrell
Councillor Sue Lissimore	Councillor Julie Young

Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager and Peter Randall, Senior Democratic Services Officer were supporting the meeting.

1. Membership, apologies and declarations

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Lissimore and, in his absence, Cllr Platt to the Committee, following the recent membership changes.

Councillor Aldridge was substituting for Councillor Platt.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25 February 2020 were approved by the committee as an accurate record.

3. Questions from the public

No questions from members of the public were received.

4. Covid-19 Finance Update

The committee received report CPSC/03/20.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting:

- Councillor Chris Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance
- Councillor David Finch, Leader of the Council
- Stephanie Mitchener, Director of Finance and Engagement
- Tina French, Head of Strategic Finance and Insight

Councillor Finch introduced the item:

- There have been a high number of decisions taken in the past 8 weeks that pre-date Cllr Whitbread taking over the portfolio

- Expressed his thanks to Cllr Mackrory for the number of urgent decisions that were passed to him, enabling the Council to act quickly to make funding available for areas that required it during Covid-19.

Councillor Whitbread talked the Committee through the presentation:

- Majority of decisions relate to social care and funds were used from the emergency reserves and general balance
- Income losses have been incurred as a result
- ECC has so far received £37m and a further £62m from central Government
- Discussions between ECC and CCG's are ongoing to obtain a share of their funding from Government
- Forecast loss of income of £14m - £5m from Fees and Charges and the remainder in Adult Social Care
- ECC is looking at furloughing some staff where appropriate, particularly in those areas which generate Fees and Charges – potential saving of around £300k per month
- The estimated risk exposure is £128m
- £106.7m of the financial commitments made are 'one-offs'
- Central Government spending review has been delayed, along with the Business Rate Retention Scheme and Fair Funding Review
- ECC is working closely with local Council's around Council Tax and support
- A further £26.2m has been received from central Government since the agenda was published.

The committee asked several questions and received the following responses:

- Substantial funding has been received and central Government are looking to local Council's to fund some of the costs incurred as a result of Covid-19
- ECC has a stringent procurement process and is doing everything possible to ensure good value for money, particularly around PPE
- Earmarked reserves are for specific purposes. Members have the ability to re-purpose reserves if areas of priority change
- The debt position is reviewed quarterly and trends have shown that new debts have dropped compared to what they normally are across Adult Social Care. Older debts are declining, and new debts are increasing
- A 1% reduction in Council Tax equates to £700m. Impact on Council Tax will be felt next financial year
- ECC are lobbying central Government hard for additional funding to meet the difference in spend
- More work needs to be done around Adult Social Care and acknowledged that what has happened in care homes is tragic
- Unsure when the emergency will end from an NHS point of view
- SELEP has been advised its local growth funding for 2020/21 will be paid initially due to a number of committed schemes that run into 2020/21. Central Government have said they will be looking to review commitments against schemes that would be funded through local growth funding.

The Chairman thanked officers for their work on this matter, particularly with there being so many unknowns.

5. Work Programme

The current work programme was noted by the committee.

The committee asked if a comprehensive report, similar to the report on Property Holdings, could be prepared on the Commercial Investment Strategy.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that July's meeting will involve future work programme planning.

6. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 30 June 2020 at 10:30am.

7. Urgent business

No urgent business was received.

8. Urgent exempt business

No urgent exempt business was received.

The meeting closed at 1:30pm.

Chairman